

Updates from abroad

“En Lot Sapit Mon Lavi...”

John Gappy, a well-loved former Seychellois Roman Catholic priest, is presently living with his family in Manila, Philippines. Many have wondered what the former priest, better known to many as ‘Per’ Gappy, has been up to all this time. Below, Mr. Gappy shares what he has been doing up to now with TODAY’s readers.

by John Gappy



cess to these cultures would be a profound healing process for our people. Western proselytism has always led to division, conflict, persecution and abuse. In ADMU we try to form a respectful and peace seeking youth.

The University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD) offers me another liberated intellectual environment. This state university is well known for its liberal stances and critical engagement with society. The intellectually free environment has allowed me to approach certain controversial human issues with an open mind. Recently, UPD students held their 2017 Gay Parade with the theme: ‘We Love Equality’. I grew up with a very discriminatory perspective of the LG-BTQ+. After much intellectual enlightenment, supported by

us living together. I fell in love with Harry the moment I saw him in high school.” As I emphatically listen to these kind of human experiences, my understanding of relationships has been deeply transformed. I am aware that this debate is still very polarised back in Seychelles. Social sciences invite us to consider social reality as it is concretely lived by real persons instead of letting our old world speculative conditioning push us into acts of emotional assaults against people who simply love each other and want to be together.

Another significant insight and practice by students of UPD are their social, cultural, economical and political engagements. Ever since I have been in the Philippines, since 2006, all government administrations, including present and



As ‘Per’ Gappy (centre), he was a well-loved priest whose creativity with regards to music, as well as his approach to people was well appreciated by a lot of people

was deeply moved with this remark and immediately opened avenues for lay people to equally discuss and contribute in pastoral decisions and actions. However, this did not sit well with the hierarchy.

What about my future? I love

me. I now have a family that is so well integrated here. In the near future I will be visiting Seychelles with my family. Long term? Who knows? Time will tell. What can I contribute to Seychelles? I would love to collaborate with local anthropologists and the academe of the University of Seychelles. Sometime back a good friend asked me: “As an anthropologist, what would you say is the current Seychellois identity?” I may now suggest that, like everywhere else, we do not have one fixed identity. We have coexisting multiple identities that constantly interact and change over time. We need social scientists to continuously journey with our people so as to ascertain their aspirations and needs at all times. I can be part of this journey anytime, even if I live in Manila. Technology can easily correct geographical distances in today’s world. Hopefully I can contribute to what is already being done back home.

It is a great moment in my current life journey to open up to my fellow Seychellois as so many have been asking about my whereabouts. I will first present my academic journey and family life. Then I will share a few insights on what being an anthropologist means to me today. Finally I want to tackle the question of my future, so many people have been asking...

In June 2011 I was accepted in the MA Anthropology degree at the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU). In 2014, while I was working on my MA thesis, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of ADMU invited me to become a part time lecturer. I hold this position until now. In August this year I was accepted in the PhD course at the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD). In 2012 Kristine and I entered a serious relationship and we are now married. Kristine is a pediatrician with a subspecialty in allergy-immunology. She also teaches at the University of Santo Tomas

medical school in Metro-Manila. We are now a family with Derick my 13 years old step son and our 3-year-old daughter Martina.

The university where I teach practices academic freedom. Professors are respected and have freedom of speech in their fields of expertise. In other words, we are not expected to obey orders just for the sake of being obedient! We discuss and negotiate university life as mature academicians and respect each other. As professors, we focus on developing student’s critical analysis of society. We do not impose belief systems upon them but rather seek to facilitate their understanding and respect of the variety of cultural practices within the Philippines. This leads to peaceful coexistence of different religious beliefs and social perspectives. For so long our Seychelles’ African, Malagasy and Asian roots have been emotionally and physically ill-treated by the supposedly western civilised world. Regaining anthropological ac-



In 2014, whilst working on his Masters degree, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University invited him to become a part time lecturer, a position he still holds

several empathic encounters with those we call ‘gays’, I now see things very differently. Once a very successful businessman sat down with me and said (I paraphrase): “You see, Harry and I are together for more than 20 years now. I have been telling him that it’s time for us to tell our relatives about our relationship even if they are members of a prominent catholic charismatic movement in the Philippines. Probably they already know because they see

past presidents, had to face strongly articulated criticisms accompanied by students’ peaceful but powerful protests. These students do not take what public institutions decide or do passively. They hold debates, gather information, take into consideration different opinions, analyse and assess the situation. They follow this up with public statements that often challenge social institutions to reconsider their positions. I find this form of social dialogue to be of great importance. Social studies show that when peaceful dissents are suppressed, people lose interest in social issues and society regresses. This happens because people better contribute to progress when they have sufficient freedom to debate, discuss, challenge, and formulate consensus together. I still recall a remark made to me by a Seychelles’ senior SBC radio manager. She told me: “I find it’s a pity that the Clergy does not take time to listen to what we, educated people, have to contribute to the institution. We are only asked to follow and obey what is said from the pulpit. They do not try to seek and understand our views.” I

Seychelles and all Seychellois. However, after being sent here, I learnt to embrace my Manila life with a positive attitude that saved

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2018 to all Seychellois!

“En Lot Sapit Mon Lavi” pe gan-ny ekri”

Much Love,
John Gappy.



The university where I teach practices academic freedom. Professors are respected and have freedom of speech in their fields of expertise. The university where I teach practices academic freedom. Professors are respected and have freedom of speech in their fields of expertise



“The intellectually free environment has allowed me to approach certain controversial human issues with an open mind” - John Gappy